Kindergarten

DISCOVER AMERICA

Teacher Guide



Robert Fulton's Steamboat

LITTLEPATRIOTS

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Key Themes

- Creativity and Innovation
- Perseverance

Core Values

- Community
- Liberty



Learning Objectives

Students will be able to

- Define "perseverance" and explain how it can be a powerful tool that anyone can use to achieve their goals.
- Define "innovator" as someone who devises a new way to make something more useful or solves a problem in a better way.
- Identify the steamboat as a new and different type of boat compared with keelboats, sailboats, and rowboats.
- Explain the significance of steamboats, including their ability to travel quickly and against the current—something no other boat could do at the time.
- Recognize that Fulton's success was the result of perseverance.

Key Terms

01 **perseverance:** to keep going and to continue to try, even when something is hard, tricky, or frustrating, until you reach your goal or complete your idea.

02 **innovator:** someone who takes an existing idea or invention and improves it to make it better, easier to use, or safer.

03 **inventor:** someone who thinks of a completely new idea or makes something that has never been made before, usually to solve a problem.

04 **steamboat:** a boat that moves using steam power instead of sails or oars.

05 **voyage:** a trip from one place to another.

Introduction

TELL Students 📷🔑

Hello, Little Patriots! Today is going to be a very important day for you! Do you want to know why? Well, today you'll learn about a superpower that each and every one of you already has—and you might not even know it! It's a superpower you can choose to use every single day for the rest of your life! **[Reference Superhero Image]** Its name comes from three very old word pieces that mean very, strong, and hold. Bundled into a new word, we have the word **perseverance**, which is when you keep working toward a goal, an idea, or the completion of a project—never giving up, never letting go of your strong hold—until you achieve it. **[Reference Perseverance Image]** When you refuse to let go or give up, you can be incredibly powerful! Now, let's play a thumbs up/thumbs down game to learn more!

ASK Students

- Give me a thumbs up if you have ever tried something new that was hard to do.
- Give me a thumbs up if you ever wanted to give up and stop trying.
- Give me a thumbs up if you kept going even though your task was tricky.
- Give me a thumbs up if you have ever had an idea for a new gadget or a new game.
- Give me a thumbs up if you thought of a way to make a game or an object more useful or easier to use.

TELL Students 📷🔑

Just like you've kept going when something was hard or tricky, inventors use their imagination to create new things to solve problems. An **inventor** is someone who thinks of a completely new idea or makes something that has never been made before, usually to solve a problem. **[Reference Inventor Image]** For example, long ago people invented candles so they could have light after sundown.

ASK Students

What does an inventor do?

TELL Students 📷🔑

Innovators take the invention a step further—they use their imagination to improve things, usually to find a better way to solve a problem or to make something easier to use.

Introduction

TELL Students (continued)

An **innovator** is someone who takes an existing idea or invention and improves it to make it better, easier to use, or safer. **[Reference Innovator Image]** For instance, candles gave light, but they could be messy or dangerous if the flame wasn't watched. A man named Thomas Edison invented the electric light bulb to solve those problems—it was easy to use, had no flame, and didn't drip wax everywhere. **[Reference Lightbulb Image]** Later, other innovators created new kinds of electric light bulbs called LEDs that cost less, lasted longer, and stayed cool to the touch, making them much safer. Today, we're going to learn about another innovator who also showed great perseverance. This great man, with the help of his friend, improved a boat that changed America. His name was Robert Fulton, and he was a steam-powered perseverance patriot! **[Reference Robert Fulton Image]**

WATCH

Star Spangled Adventures Ep. 18: Fulton's Steamboat

Lesson

TELL Students 📷

In our Star Spangled Adventures cartoon, we learned about a clever man named Robert Fulton. **[Reference Robert Fulton Image]** In 1807, he lived in New York. Mr. Fulton wanted to solve a very tricky problem. He wanted to make a boat that moved quickly against the river current without needing oars **[Reference Oar Image]** or strong winds.

ASK Students

What do you think Robert Fulton did to solve this problem?

TELL Students 📷

Two hundred long years ago, people used sailboats and rowboats to travel on rivers. These boats could float easily with the river current downstream toward the sea. **[Reference Current Image]** But what if people wanted to go up the river, against the current? That was a big problem! Farmers and factories needed to send fruits, vegetables, and other goods upriver, but sailboats and rowboats could only travel with the current. One solution was a keelboat, which could go upriver, but it was very slow, and food and goods were often spoiled before they got to their destination. **[Reference Keelboat Image]** Fortunately, Robert Fulton was very creative. He loved solving problems, liked making new things, and was very perseverant—he never gave up, even when the problem was hard.

ASK Students

What do you think Robert Fulton might have done first to try to solve this tricky problem?

TELL Students 📷

Mr. Fulton had a very bright imagination, and he used it to solve this tricky problem! He thought like an artist, and he was full of ideas about how things might work and what they could look like. **[Reference Fulton Image]** He could also draw his ideas with lines, curves, and colors so that other people could see exactly what he imagined. We'll learn more about his background—and even see what he actually looked like—when we watch an exciting episode of Learn More with Liberty.

Lesson

WATCH
Learn More with Liberty: Robert Fulton



TELL Students
Mr. Fulton's talents helped him meet many interesting people, including Benjamin Franklin, another inventor and thinker who helped shape America. **[Reference Benjamin Franklin Image]**

ASK Students
What do you remember about Benjamin Franklin?

TELL Students
Mr. Fulton had an important friend, a man named Robert Livingston. **[Reference Robert Livingston Image]** Livingston helped write the Declaration of Independence! He lived near the Hudson River on a beautiful property called Clermont in New York. He agreed to give Robert Fulton the money he needed to design and build a successful steam-powered boat, or a steamboat. A **steamboat** is a boat that moves using steam power instead of sails or oars. **[Reference Steamboat Image]** It uses a big engine that boils water to make steam, which helps the boat move through the water, even against the river current.

ASK Students
What is a steamboat?

TELL Students
At first, designing and building the steamboat was very difficult, and Robert Fulton faced a lot of challenges. He failed several times. Even after failing, Fulton didn't give up—he persevered. Many people thought riding a steamboat was dangerous, and some people in his community didn't think a big boat could move against the river current. Bravely, Fulton and Livingston went ahead anyway. They named their first boat *The North River Steamboat*. **[Reference The North River Steamboat]**

Lesson

ASK Students
What do you think gave Robert Fulton the courage to keep working on his steamboat?

TELL Students 📷
Because Fulton didn't give up, his hard work paid off! On August 17, 1807, the *North River Steamboat* made its very first trip from New York City to Albany along the Hudson River. The trip took 32 hours to go upriver, and it was even faster on the way back! Thirty-two hours might seem like a long time, but in 1807, people were used to traveling on keelboats. These old-fashioned boats could go upriver, but very slowly, using a lot of rowing or sailing to fight against the river's current. **[Reference Rowing Image]**

ASK Students
Why do you think Fulton's steamboat was so exciting?

TELL Students 📷🔑
After its first **voyage**—a trip from one place to another—the steamboat began carrying both people and goods up and down the river, making life easier for everyone. People started calling the *North River Steamboat* the *Clermont*, after Robert Livingston's large plantation on the Hudson River. **[Reference *Clermont* Image]** Passengers paid $7 for a one-way trip, which was a very large amount of money at the time! Even with the cost, the speed and convenience of the steamboat made it worthwhile.

ASK Students
What does one-way mean? What is a voyage?

TELL Students 📷
Fulton's boats helped America grow by moving goods quickly along the country's rivers. Factories could make new items and send them upriver by steamboat. With faster shipping, customers didn't have to wait as long for their goods to arrive. People living upriver, finally able to receive these new items and gadgets quickly, could complete their daily tasks more easily. As new ideas turned into factory-made products with ease, it became clear that Fulton and Livingston helped start a whole new era in America. **[Reference Fulton and Livingston Images]**

Lesson

TELL Students (Continued)

Their success shows how important innovation and perseverance are—working hard, never giving up, and using creativity can lead to big achievements. These same qualities—determination, creativity, and effort—are at the heart of the American dream.



Perseverance Obstacle Course

Objective

- Reinforce the concept of perseverance in a fun, active way.
- Show students that keeping going, even when things are tricky, can help them reach a goal—just like Fulton did with his steamboat.

Materials

- Cones or chairs to mark obstacles
- Small beanbags, balls, or soft blocks
- Large open space (gym, playground, or classroom with cleared area)
- Stopwatch or timer (optional)

Setup

- Create a simple "river course" with obstacles representing challenges Fulton faced:
  - Currents: Walk in a zig-zag line around cones.
  - Fallen logs: Step over blocks or beanbags.
  - Wind or rough water: Crawl under a table or small tunnel.
  - Steamboat engine challenge: Carry "cargo" (beanbag or ball) from start to finish.

Instructions

1. Explain: "Today, you will pretend you are Robert Fulton trying to get your steamboat upriver. There are challenges along the way—just like Fulton faced. Your goal is to keep going, even when it's tricky, until you reach the end!"
2. Students move through the course one at a time or in small groups.
3. If they drop their "cargo" or stumble, they have to pick it up and continue—reinforcing perseverance.
4. Celebrate completion: every student who finishes gets a "Perseverance Star" (stickers or paper stars).

Extension Questions

- "What part was the hardest? Did you want to give up?"
- "How is this like what Fulton did when his first steamboat didn't work?"
- "How did you feel when you finally finished?"



Perseverance Obstacle Course

Optional

- Have students design their own “river challenges” for classmates, emphasizing creative problem-solving, just like Fulton innovated.

Community Needs Worksheet

NAME: _____ DATE _____

Teacher Prompt: In the early 1800s, communities along the Mississippi River faced a big transportation problem. Farmers and factories had difficulty moving their crops and goods up and down the river because keelboats relied on rowing with oars or drifting with the river's current. Travel was very slow, and sometimes food and other goods would spoil or get stolen. As a result, a lot of food and manufactured items went to waste. A solution to this shipping problem was desperately needed.

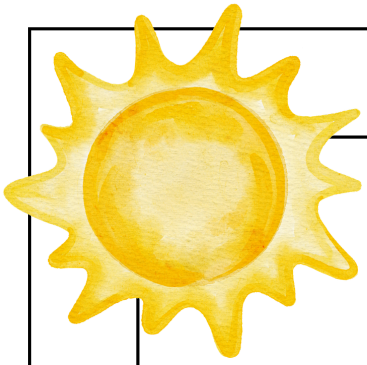
How did the steamboat help meet the needs of the community in the 1800's?
Put an "X" in the box for the needs of the community:

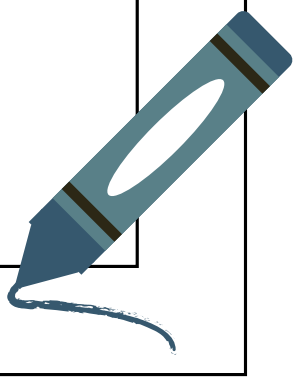
- ☐ steamboat 
- ☐ meat 
- ☐ leather for shoes 
- ☐ fruit/vegetables 
- ☐ faster travel 
- ☐ grain for bread 
- ☐ wood 
- ☐ fabric for clothes 
- ☐ letters from family 
- ☐ metal for tools 
- ☐ cotton for yarn 
- ☐ plants for medicine 

Community Needs Worksheet

NAME: _____ DATE _____

Draw a picture to show how steamboats helped the communities located near rivers.





Resources

"Studying the past makes it possible for us to understand the human story across time."(NCSS, 1921)

"Knowledge and understanding of the past enable us to analyze the causes and consequences of events and developments and to place these in the context of the institutions, values, and beliefs of the periods in which they took place." (NCSS, 1921)

"The study of people, places, and environments enables us to understand the relationship between human populations and the physical world." (NCSS, 1921)

"Questions related to identity and development, which are important in psychology, sociology, and anthropology, are central to understanding who we are." (NCSS, 1921)

"The study of individual development and identity will help students to describe factors important to the development of personal identity." (NCSS, 1921)

- https://www.sam.usace.army.mil/Portals/46/docs/recreation/OP-CO/montgomery/pdfs/10thand11th/ahistoryofsteamboats.pdf
- https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/steamboat
- http://www.southernlancasterhistory.org/robert-fulton-birthplace
- https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/theymadeamerica/whomade/fulton_hi.html
- http://www.southernlancasterhistory.org/robert-fulton-birthplace
- https://lemelson.mit.edu/resources/robert-fulton
- https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/theymadeamerica/whomade/fulton_hi.html
- https://www.sam.usace.army.mil/Portals/46/docs/recreation/OPCO/montgomery/pdfs/10thand11th/ahistoryofsteamboats.pdf
- https://lemelson.mit.edu/resources/robert-fulton
- https://www.nytimes.com/1987/11/17/opinion/l-why-fulton-achieved-steamboat-success-003087.html
- http://www.southernlancasterhistory.org/robert-fulton-birthplace
- https://lemelson.mit.edu/resources/robert-fulton
- https://www.nytimes.com/1987/11/17/opinion/l-why-fulton-achieved-steamboat-success-003087.html

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- https://www.sam.usace.army.mil/Portals/46/docs/recreation/OPCO/montgomery/pdfs/10thand11th/ahistoryofsteamboats.pdf
- http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/fulton.htm
- https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/steamboat
- https://lemelson.mit.edu/resources/robert-fulton
- https://www.sam.usace.army.mil/Portals/46/docs/recreation/OPCO/montgomery/pdfs/10thand11th/ahistoryofsteamboats.pdf

Images

Superhero



Credit: Canva Pro

Perseverance



Credit: Canva Pro

Images

Inventor



Credit: Canva Pro

Innovator



Credit: Canva Pro

Images

Lightbulb



Credit: Canva Pro

Robert Fulton



Credit: Wikipedia

Images

Oar



Credit: Canva Pro

Current



Credit: Canva Pro

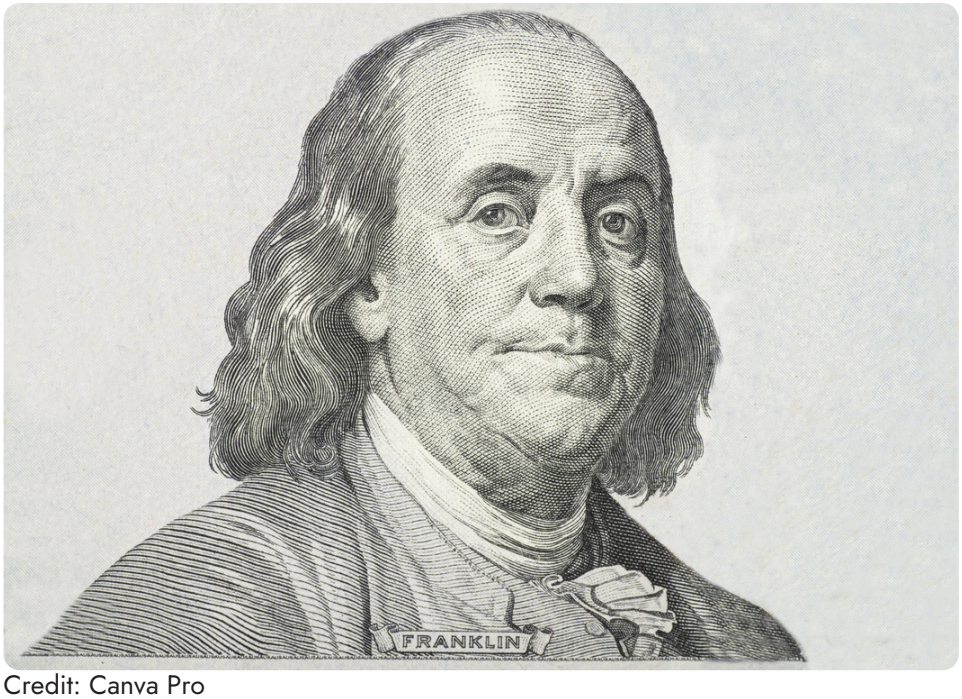
Images

Keelboat



Credit: Wikipedia

Benjamin Franklin



Credit: Canva Pro

Images

Robert Livingston



Credit: Wikipedia

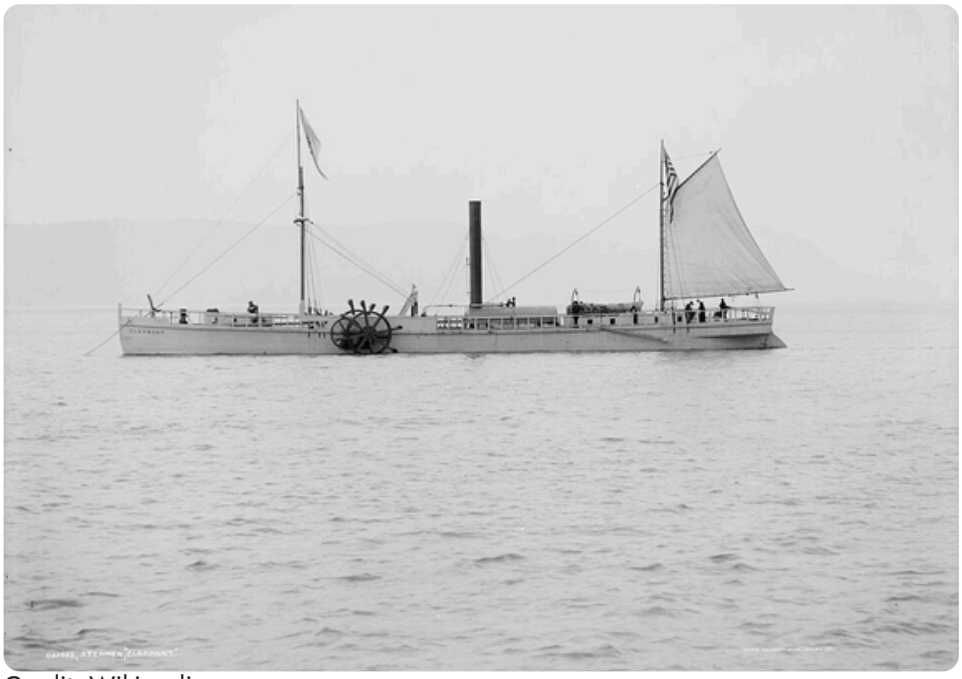
Steamboat



Credit: Canva Pro

Images

North River Steamboat



Credit: Wikipedia

Rowing



Credit: Canva Pro

Images

Clermont



Credit: Wikipedia

Notes